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'68 Memo by C.I.A. Aide Read at CBS Libel Trial

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Thirteen years before he became a paid consultant to CBS-TV on its 1982 documentary on Vietnam, a C.I.A. analyst told his superiors that Gen. William C. Westmoreland's command had engaged in a "monument of deceit" regarding estimates of enemy strength in the Vietnam War.

The assessment by the analyst, Samuel A. Adams, was contained in an internal Central Intelligence Agency memorandum that was read to the jury yesterday in the libel case brought against CBS by General Westmoreland, who is expected to take the stand today.

In the memo, Mr. Adams accused General Westmoreland's command of "half-truths, distortions and sometimes outright falsehoods" regarding the size and nature of enemy forces in South Vietnam in 1967. It was, basically, these same charges that were leveled on the 1982 "CBS Reports" documentary, "The Uncounted Enemy: A Vietnam Deception."

Mr. Adams is also a defendant in General Westmoreland's \$120 million libel suit, which stems from the broadcast and is being tried in Federal Court in Manhattan.

Memo Introduced in Court

The memo — dated Jan. 31, 1968, the day after the start of the Tet offensive — was written to George A. Carver Jr., then chief of Vietnamese affairs for the C.I.A. and Mr. Adams's immediate superior. It was introduced by David Boies, the lawyer for CBS, during his cross-examination of Mr. Carver.

In September 1967, Mr. Carver led a delegation of intelligence officials to a conference with military leaders in Saigon, where an agreement was struck on size of the North Vietnamese and Vietcong forces in South Vietnam to be included in a report for President

Johnson. Initially, the C.I.A. argued for significantly higher estimates of enemy strength than did General Westmoreland's command.

In the memo of Jan. 31, 1968, Mr. Adams notified Mr. Carver that he was leaving his staff to take a job with the agency's office of economic research, where he said he could pursue his interest in Vietcong organization and manpower.

But the "fundamental" reason for his departure, Mr. Adams said, related to what he called a compromise on enemy strength that been forged in Saigon the previous September.

Criticized C.I.A.

Mr. Adams said the C.I.A., and particularly Mr. Carver's staff, had made a "mistake" in agreeing to lower figures on the estimate of enemy strength in South Vietnam and had thereby "basically misinformed policymakers of the strength of the enemy."

The C.I.A., Mr. Adams said in the two-page memo, had not been "sufficiently diligent in bringing to the attention of the intelligence community the numerical and organizational strength of our adversaries in Vietnam."

Mr. Adams said in the memo that he realized the "pressures" on the C.I.A. — originating, he said, from General Westmoreland's command — "have been enormous."

"We have occasionally protested," he said, "but neither loud enough, nor long enough."

Analyst Present at Meeting

On direct examination at the trial, Mr. Carver testified that Mr. Adams was present in Saigon when the the C.I.A. developed its alternative offer to the military and had not dissented from it. Mr. Carver said, however, that Mr. Adams had expressed his feelings about the final enemy troop estimates before writing the memo. He described Mr. Adams, 51 years old, as someone who is "often in error, seldom in doubt."

Yesterday, Mr. Carver told Mr. Boies that he respected Mr. Adams's ability and had recommended him for the "promotion" to the office of economic research. But he said he had reservations about Mr. Adams's judgment and about his readiness to accept the fact that, in government, "you have many arguments" and while "you win some, you lose some."

The CBS documentary focused on the events surrounding the preparation in 1967 of a revised order of battle and of a new intelligence estimate on enemy strength in Vietnam for President Johnson. An order of battle is the official military listing of enemy forces.

Besides serving as a consultant for the documentary, Mr. Adams also appeared on the 90-minute broadcast. Like Mr. Adams, CBS contended in the documentary that, by minimizing the size of the enemy in 1967, General Westmoreland's command had left the President, the Joint Chiefs of Staff and American troops unprepared for the magnitude of the Tet offensive in January 1968.

New Order of Battle

The accord reached in Saigon in September 1967 listed a total enemy military force of 223,000 to 248,000, plus a separate category for 80,000 to 90,000 political cadre. The figure of 248,000 represented a decline of 51,000 from the existing order of battle, which, unlike the new listing, included the political cadre. The existing order of battle also included 70,000 Vietcong self-defense forces, which were now dropped from the listing in favor of a "verbal description" of them. C.I.A. and military estimates of the self-defense forces in 1967 put their number at about 120,000.

Yesterday, Mr. Boies introduced another memo to show that, even after these figures were settled on, C.I.A. officials — including Mr. Carver — were uncertain of their validity.

In a Nov. 3, 1967, memo to Richard Helms, the Director of Central Intelligence, Mr. Carver wrote that "evidence has come to light which suggests the VC may be further blurring the distinction" between armed guerrillas and the self-defense forces.

Mr. Carver told Mr. Helms that "we will need to do a lot more concentrated research in this area" if the kind of agreement made in Saigon was not to prove "more misleading than helpful."